

# MINORITIES IN DEFENSE



PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

NEGRO EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING BRANCH, LABOR DIVISION, WPB

MINORITY GROUPS BRANCH, LABOR DIVISION, WPB



SOCIAL SECURITY BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C.

## THE PRESIDENT SPEAKS

No Nation combatting the increasing threat of totalitarianism can afford arbitrarily to exclude large segments of its population from its defense industries. Even more important is it for us to strengthen our unity and morale by refuting at home the very theories which we are fighting abroad.

Our Government cannot countenance continued discrimination against American citizens in defense production. Industry must take the initiative in opening the doors of employment to all loyal and qualified workers regardless of race, national origin, religion, or color. American workers, both organized and unorganized, must be prepared to welcome the general and much-needed employment of fellow-workers of all racial and nationality origins in defense industries.

In the present emergency, it is imperative that we deal effectively and speedily with this problem. I shall expect the Office of Production Management to take immediate steps to facilitate the full utilization of our productive manpower.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

*(From a memorandum to William S. Knudsen  
and Sidney Hillman, June 12, 1941).*

## FOREWORD

Since the inception of the defense program, a number of decisive steps have been taken by the President of the United States and the Office of Production Management (now War Production Board) to assure the participation of American minority groups in the program. There has been some confusion regarding the work of the units set up to handle the problems incident to such participation, and it is to dissolve some of that confusion that this pamphlet is issued.

In the following pages are given the duties and chief officers of the following main units set up to handle such problems: The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, the Negro Employment and Training Branch, and the Minority Groups Branch, the latter two being Branches in the Labor Division of the War Production Board. Also included are a chronology of the steps taken to prevent discrimination in the defense program, and complete texts of President Roosevelt's memorandum to Messrs. Knudsen and Hillman of the Office of Production Management, his Executive Orders 8802 and 8823, his letter to the Committee on Fair Employment Practice regarding discrimination in the federal service, and his letter to heads of all Government departments and independent establishments regarding the same matter.

To the Committee on Fair Employment Practice should be addressed all complaints on racial or minority discrimination in defense employment.

LAWRENCE W. CRAMER, *Executive Secretary*  
Committee on Fair Employment Practice

ROBERT C. WEAVER, *Chief*  
Negro Employment and Training Branch  
Labor Division, WPB

WILL W. ALEXANDER, *Consultant in charge*  
Minority Groups Branch  
Labor Division, WPB

*Washington, D. C.*  
*March 15, 1942*

## FOREWORD

# MINORITIES IN DEFENSE

## PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

MALCOLM S. MACLEAN (*Chairman*), *President, Hampton Institute*

MARK ETHRIDGE, *Louisville Courier-Journal*

DAVID SARNOFF, *Radio Corporation of America*

WILLIAM GREEN, *American Federation of Labor*

PHILIP MURRAY, *Congress of Industrial Organizations*

MILTON P. WEBSTER, *Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*

EARL B. DICKERSON, *City Council of Chicago, Illinois*

*Alternates:*

FRANK FENTON, *for Mr. Green*

JOHN BROPHY, *for Mr. Murray*

LAWRENCE W. CRAMER, *Executive Secretary*

The Committee on Fair Employment Practice was established in the Office of Production Management (now War Production Board) by President Roosevelt through Executive Orders 8802 and 8823. These orders were issued following the receipt of evidence that available and needed workers were being barred from employment in defense industries, solely because of considerations of race, creed, color, or national origin, to the detriment of workers' morale and of national unity. (Full texts of Executive Orders 8802 and 8823 are given on pages 15-17.)

The Committee, whose six members were appointed on July 19, 1941, receives and investigates complaints of discrimination against workers in defense industries, and takes appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds to be valid. It also recommends to the several departments and agencies of the Government of the United States, and to the President, all measures which may be deemed by it necessary or proper to secure the full participation in the defense program of all persons, regardless of race, creed, color, or origin.

In order to avoid duplication in organization and function, the Committee utilizes the staffs of the Negro Employment and Training Branch and the Minority Groups Branch of the Labor Division of WPB for primary investigation and employer contacts. It maintains a field and office staff in the Social Security Building, Washington, D. C., however, for special investigations and office work.

The following functions have been outlined by the Committee:

- 1 To serve as a Board of Appeal for the Minority Groups and Negro Employment and Training Branches in cases certified by those Branches to the Committee.
- 2 To deal with the problem of discrimination in Government service.
- 3 To maintain contact with contracting agencies of the Government concerning the enforcement of the non-discrimination clause in defense contracts.
- 4 To establish contact with state and local agencies concerned with discrimination in employment where created, and coordinate their programs with that of the Committee.
- 5 To establish and maintain contact with minorities organizations and with other organizations and with key individuals.

# NEGRO EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING BRANCH

*Labor Division, War Production Board*

ROBERT C. WEAVER, *Chief*

## **Organization and Functions**

The primary aim of the Negro Employment and Training Branch of the Labor Division, War Production Board, is to help qualified Negro workers participate in the training and employment opportunities of the national defense program. Working closely with the Minority Groups Branch and other branches of WPB, this unit is charged with responsibility for removing employment barriers erected against competent and available colored workers either by employers or by labor organizations.

This Branch makes primary investigations and employer contacts on complaints involving Negro workers which have been filed with the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, and seeks to adjust employment difficulties. On the other hand, when no solution of a complaint filed with the Negro Employment and Training Branch is obtained by this Branch, the case is certified to the President's Committee for further action.

The Chief of the Negro Employment and Training Branch is one of the twelve officials of governmental agencies who comprise the Federal Labor Supply Committee, and members of his staff serve on Regional Labor Supply Committees in Boston, Mass.; New York City, N. Y.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Washington, D. C.; Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Mo.; San Antonio, Tex.; Chicago, Ill.; San Francisco, Calif; and Birmingham, Ala. The Federal Labor Supply Committee makes recommendations to Mr. Hillman on policies to be

followed in assuring a full complement of labor in defense industries, and Regional Labor Supply Committees carry out these policies in the field.

In addition to investigating complaints and executing labor supply assignments, the Negro Employment and Training Branch expands job opportunities for colored workers by:

- 1** Systematic visits to industrial employers for the purpose of facilitating the employment of qualified and available Negro workers.
- 2** Regular surveys of training facilities in various communities to assure compliance with Federal policy on defense training.
- 3** Constant contact with the Bureau of Employment Security and with local offices of the United States Employment Service to secure the placement of Negro workers through approved governmental agencies.



# MINORITY GROUPS BRANCH

*Labor Division, War Production Board*

WILL W. ALEXANDER, *Chief*

## Organization and Functions

The Minority Groups Branch of the Labor Division, War Production Board, has been assigned the task of working toward the integration into defense employment of all qualified members of racial minority groups (including the physically handicapped) other than Negroes. Working closely with the Negro Employment and Training Branch and other units of WPB, this Branch makes primary investigations and employer contacts on complaints involving minority groups which have been filed with the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice. It also refers to the President's Committee those cases which it has been unable to adjust.

The Chief of the Minority Groups Branch is also a member of the Federal Labor Supply Committee, and members of his staff serve on Regional Labor Supply Committees in Boston, Mass.; New York City, N. Y.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Washington, D. C.; Chicago, Ill.; Birmingham, Ala.; San Antonio, Tex.; and San Francisco, Calif.

The work of this Branch, like that of the Negro Employment and Training Branch of WPB, involves:

- 1 Contacts with industrial employers regarding employment policies and the adjustment of such policies to include minority groups.
- 2 Participation in all Federal and regional meetings of labor supply committees for cooperation in establishing policies for the utilization of the total labor supply.
- 3 Continual contact with the Bureau of Employment Security and local offices of the United States Employment Service for the referral of members of minority groups and the physically handicapped to defense jobs.
- 4 Cooperation with organizations representing minority groups and with labor unions where interests are involved in the employment of racial minority groups.

## **OFFICIAL STEPS TAKEN ON DISCRIMINATION IN DEFENSE EMPLOYMENT**

**July 12, 1940:**

An Administrative Assistant was appointed to Mr. Hillman's staff in the Labor Division of the National Defense Advisory Commission, and assigned the task of developing policies for the integration of Negro workers into the training and employment phases of the national defense program.

**July, 1940:**

The U. S. Office of Education, at the behest of the NDAC, announced that "in the expenditure of Federal funds for vocational training for defense, there should be no discrimination on account of race, creed, or color." (Office of Education, Misc. 2410, ND 10)

**August 31, 1940:**

NDAC announced a statement of labor policy which stipulated that workers should not be discriminated against because of age, sex, race, or color. (PR 87, 87-a)

**September 15, 1940:**

President Roosevelt cited the NDAC's nondiscrimination policy in a message to Congress on the defense program.

**October 7, 1940:**

At the behest of the NDAC, Congress placed the following provision in the legislation appropriating money for defense training: "No trainee under the foregoing appropriation shall be discriminated against because of sex.

race, or color; and where separate schools are required by law for separate population groups, to the extent needed for trainees of such groups, equitable provision shall be made for facilities for training of like quality." (N-3)

**October 12, 1940:**

Mr. Hillman announced that the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations had reached an agreement with the NDAC to assume responsibility for removing barriers against Negro workers in defense industries. (N-5)

**November 20, 1940:**

John W. Studebaker, U. S. Commissioner of Education, in a special letter to State and local Boards of Education, called attention to the nondiscrimination clause in defense training legislation and urged all directors of defense programs to take special steps to facilitate the training of Negroes. (N-8)

**January 3, 1941:**

The Training-Within-Industry Branch of OPM instructed all regional and field representatives to pay special attention to the question of Negro workers in the upgrading and apprentice programs in defense plants. (TWI- 9)

**April 11, 1941:**

At the instruction of OPM, Mr. Hillman sent a special letter to all holders of defense contracts, asking a removal of bans against qualified and competent Negro workers in defense industries. This letter stated: "All holders of defense contracts are urged to examine their employment and training policies at once to determine whether or not these policies make ample provision for the full utilization of available and competent Negro workers. Every available source of labor capable of producing defense material must be tapped in the present emergency." (N-13)

**April 11, 1941:**

Mr. Hillman created the Negro Employment and Training Branch and the Minority Groups Branch in the Labor Division of OPM, and named Dr. Robert C. Weaver and Dr. Will W. Alexander as respective Chiefs of the two new units. All other branches of OPM were instructed to pay special attention to Negro and minority racial group problems.

**June 12, 1941:**

President Roosevelt, in a memorandum to Messrs. Knudsen and Hillman, placed the full support of his office behind the Hillman letter to defense contractors. The President declared: "Our Government cannot countenance continued discrimination against American citizens in defense production. Industry must take the initiative in opening the doors of employment to all loyal and qualified workers regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin. American workers, both organized and unorganized, must be prepared to welcome the general and much-needed employment of fellow-workers of all racial and nationality origins in defense industries." (White House release, June 14)

**June 25, 1941:**

President Roosevelt implemented his memorandum by issuing Executive Order 8802, reaffirming a policy of full participation in the defense program by all persons, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, and directing certain action for the furtherance of Federal policy.

(Complete text, pp. 15-16.)

**July 1, 1941:**

Mr. Hillman gave special emphasis to the drive for non-discrimination in defense employment by appointing Dr. Robert C. Weaver and Dr. Will W. Alexander as two of the twelve officials of governmental agencies who

comprise the Federal Labor Supply Committee. At the same time, members of the Negro Employment and Training Branch and the Minority Groups Branch of OPM were assigned to Regional Labor Supply Committees.

**July 18, 1941:**

President Roosevelt appointed the six members of the Committee on Fair Employment Practice.

**August 12, 1941:**

Lawrence W. Cramer was appointed Executive Secretary of the Committee on Fair Employment Practice.

**September 6, 1941:**

President Roosevelt advised the Committee on Fair Employment Practice that he had dispatched to the heads of all departments and independent establishments of the Federal Government a letter emphasizing the necessity of impartial administration of the Federal Civil Service, entirely without prejudice based on creed, race, or national origin.

(Complete text, back cover.)

**October 20 and 21, 1941:**

The Committee on Fair Employment Practice held a public hearing in Los Angeles, Calif., at which time a number of defense contractors and trade unions were called before it to explain their employment policies and answer complaints of discrimination in employment.

**January 19, 1942:**

The Committee certified to President Roosevelt the case of the International Association of Machinists Locals No. 68 San Mateo, California and 751 of Seattle, Washington charged with barring the employment of Negroes in certain defense industries.

**January 19 and 20, 1942:**

The Committee held a public hearing in Chicago, Illinois at which time certain defense contractors were called before it to explain their employment policies and answer complaints of discrimination in employment.

**January 26, 1942:**

President Roosevelt created the War Production Board which absorbed the Office of Production Management. The Committee on Fair Employment Practice was administratively transferred to WPB.

**February 7, 1942:**

Malcolm S. MacLean, President, Hampton Institute, was appointed chairman of the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice in place of Mark Ethridge, who was forced to resign because of the pressure of business but who continues as a member of the Committee.

**February 16 and 17, 1942:**

The Committee held a public hearing in New York at which time a number of defense contractors were called before it to explain their employment practices and to answer complaints of discrimination in employment.

## THE WHITE HOUSE

*June 12, 1941*

MEMORANDUM FOR

HONORABLE WILLIAM S. KNUDSEN

HONORABLE SIDNEY HILLMAN

Complaints have repeatedly been brought to my attention that available and much-needed workers are being barred from defense production solely because of race, religion, or national origin. It is said that at a time when labor stringencies are appearing in many areas, fully-qualified workers are being turned from the gates of industry on specifications entirely unrelated to efficiency and productivity. Also that discrimination against Negro workers has been nation-wide, and other minority racial, national, and religious groups have felt its effects in many localities. This situation is a matter of grave national importance, and immediate steps must be taken to deal with it effectively.

I note with satisfaction that the Office of Production Management has recognized the seriousness of this situation, and that on April 11, 1941, it addressed a letter on the subject to all holders of defense contracts. As Chief Executive of the Nation I place the full support of my office behind your statement to the effect that, "All holders of defense contracts are urged to examine their employment and training policies at once to determine whether or not these policies make ample provision for the full utilization of available and competent Negro workers. Every available source of labor capable of producing defense materials must be tapped in the present emergency."

No nation combatting the increasing threat of totalitarianism can afford arbitrarily to exclude large segments of its population from its defense industries. Even more important



is it for us to strengthen our unity and morale by refuting at home the very theories which we are fighting abroad.

Our Government cannot countenance continued discrimination against American citizens in defense production. Industry must take the initiative in opening the doors of employment to all loyal and qualified workers regardless of race, national origin, religion, or color. American workers, both organized and unorganized, must be prepared to welcome the general and much-needed employment of fellow workers of all racial and nationality origins in defense industries.

In the present emergency, it is imperative that we deal effectively and speedily with this problem. I shall expect the Office of Production Management to take immediate steps to facilitate the full utilization of our productive manpower.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT



## EXECUTIVE ORDER 8802

REAFFIRMING POLICY OF FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE DEFENSE PROGRAM BY ALL PERSONS, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CREED, COLOR, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN, AND DIRECTING CERTAIN ACTION IN FURTHERANCE OF SAID POLICY.

WHEREAS it is the policy of the United States to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders; and

WHEREAS there is evidence that available and needed workers have been barred from employment in industries engaged in defense production solely because of considerations of race, creed, color, or national origin, to the detriment of workers' morale and of national unity:

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, and as a prerequisite to the successful conduct of our national defense production effort, I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations, in furtherance of said policy and of this order, to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense

industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

And it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. All departments and agencies of the Government of the United States concerned with vocational and training programs for defense production shall take special measures appropriate to assure that such programs are administered without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

2. All contracting agencies of the Government of the United States shall include in all defense contracts hereafter negotiated by them a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

3. There is established in the Office of Production Management a Committee on Fair Employment Practice, which shall consist of a chairman and four other members to be appointed by the President. The chairman and members of the Committee shall serve as such without compensation but shall be entitled to actual and necessary transportation, subsistence, and other expenses incidental to performance of their duties. The Committee shall receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the provisions of this order and shall take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds to be valid. The Committee shall also recommend to the several departments and agencies of the Government of the United States and to the President all measures which may be deemed by it necessary or proper to effectuate the provisions of this order.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

*The White House,  
June 25, 1941.*

## EXECUTIVE ORDER 8823

PROVIDING FOR AN ADDITIONAL MEMBER OF  
THE COMMITTEE ON FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE  
IN THE OFFICE OF PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT,  
ESTABLISHED BY SECTION 3 OF  
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 8802 OF JUNE 25, 1941

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, section 3 of Executive Order No. 8802 of June 25, 1941, establishing in the Office of Production Management a Committee on Fair Employment Practices consisting of a chairman and four other members, is hereby amended to provide that the Committee shall consist of a chairman and five other members.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

*The White House,  
July 18, 1941*

## THE FEDERAL SERVICE

Under date of September 3, 1941, the President addressed the following letter to Mark Ethridge, Chairman, Fair Employment Practice Committee, Office of Production Management:

"Please accept my thanks for your letter of August twenty-ninth, to which I have given careful consideration. This will inform you that I have approved the Committee's recommendation. I am, therefore, today forwarding to the heads of all departments and independent establishments a letter emphasizing the necessity of impartial administration of the Federal Civil Service, entirely without prejudice based on creed, race, or national origin. I enclose a copy.

"May I, in advising you of my approval, ask you to convey to the members of the Committee an assurance of my heartfelt appreciation of their conscientious work, which I trust will contribute vitally to the solution of a grave problem."

The text of the letter which the President sent to the heads of all departments and independent establishments follows:

"TO HEADS OF ALL DEPARTMENTS AND INDEPENDENT ESTABLISHMENTS:

"It has come to my attention that there is in the Federal establishment a lack of uniformity and possibly some lack of sympathetic attitude toward the problems of minority groups, particularly those relating to the employment and assignment of Negroes in the Federal Civil Service.

"With a view to improving the situation, it is my desire that all departments and independent establishments in the Federal Government make a thorough examination of their personnel policies and practices to the end that they may be able to assure me that in the Federal Service the doors of employment are open to all loyal and qualified workers regardless of creed, race, or national origin.

"It is imperative that we deal with this problem speedily and effectively. I shall look for immediate steps to be taken by all departments and independent establishments of the Government to facilitate and put into effect this policy of non-discrimination in Federal employment."